Holy Confidence

Well Improved,

IN

NEHEMIAH and the JEWS:

Whose *Faithful Sports* were considered and applied to the SOCIETIES for *Reformation of Manners*; in a SERMON at *Salters-hall* in *London*, on Monday *August* 16. 1697.

And now at their Request made public.

By *Matthew Sylvester*.

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TO THE READER.

Candid Reader;

AS *Divine Providence hath exceeded all our Expectations and Deserts by the Vouchsafement of a most Grateful* Peace *in these Parts of* Christendom: *and as the same Providence hath greatly us'd and prosper'd the Agency and Conduct of our most Gracious and Illustrious Soveraign*

King WILLIAM III. *in this great Acquest, to his Immortal Honour and Renown; in all which God seems to be upon his way to bring great Things to pass: so what can more* concern *us, and* become *us, than to meet* this Providence, *and* his Majesty, *in that Spirit and Course which may best correspond with those great Obligations and Designs which are hereby laid upon us, and set before us? Sad and portentous would it be, and a Presage of dreadful Judgments in reversion, if a deliver'd Generation from all the Calamities of desolating and expensive Wars, should yet continue to wage War with Heaven, by uncontrouled Immoralities, Debaucheries, Profaneness,* &c. *God knows yet how to distress us more and more, either by Wars, or by other Judgments of equally dismal Consequence thereto, to us. What signifies our Peace with Men, if we have none with Heaven?*

Heaven? The Lord of Hosts can neither need *nor* want *fit Instruments and Engines of Distress to plague us with, when he once finds that neither* Peace *nor* War *will bring us to that dutiful and needful Reformation, which he so evidently doth attempt to* fright *and* court *us to. Fain would I hope that this Design of Reformation is on foot; and that such a Spirit is kindled amongst us as will invigorate all fit Endeavours to bring this thing to pass, and that too, under Divine Countenance and Patronage. And my Hopes are the more strong and free, in that I find so many of different Communions, as to external Discipline and Worship, to be so evidently one in this important matter. I think I have seen all the Sermons preach'd before the Societies for* Reformation of Manners *hitherto: and I have read them with great Plea-*

sure,

sure, and to my no small Satisfaction. I find them all breathing the same true Christian Spirit; and I must tell my Brethren, whether Conformists or Dissenters, that I cannot but esteem and reverence that Judgment and Savour which I have discern'd in their so excellent and pertinent Sermons. I strongly hope that the nearer we all come to God and Christ by Faith and Holiness, the more of Peace and Love we shall experience amongst our selves. And the more evident we shall render it to all Men, that we can differ in our Sentiments about the Modes of Discipline and Worship, and yet most dearly love each other. I do not hate *nor* censure *those of my Brethren whom I differ from, so many of whom I find so very much beyond my self in Parts and Learning, and Practical Christianity. I reverence all proportionably to their dis-*

discerned Excellencies. Christ hath his valuable and useful Instruments in each Communion. O that we could but love and treat each other as Christ himself doth and will love and treat us all! Why should I hate or slight any below on Earth, whom I expect and am well satisfied that I shall love and live withal in Heaven above? I neither do, nor can expect much Good from any inordinate Heats or Bigotry, where-ever fixed and practised; as knowing well who hath declared, that the Wrath of Man works not the Righteousness of God. *Sound Faith, orderly Lives, peaceable Principles and Behaviour, cordial Affections, with all fit Charities of Conversation, and a perfect Abhorrence of all Countenance to the Works of Darkness; may these,* Candid Reader, *be ever dear to thee, and to thine, in and for the sake and Universal Interest of*

the

the Great Lord of Holineſs, Peace, and Glory.

London, *Sept.* 27. 1697.

Matthew Sylveſter.

Holy

Holy Confidence Well Improved.

NEHEM. II. 20.

Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of Heaven he will prosper us; therefore we his Servants will arise and build.

§. 1. GREAT Enterprizes require several things to make them in their appearances like themselves; and more particularly such things as these. 1. Good Warrant, that they may be justifiable. 2. True Conduct, that they may be orderly. 3. Noble Spirits, whereby they may work their way through all the Difficulties and Oppositions which in all

likelihood will attend them: for as the Enterprize will deserve the Spirit, so should the Excellence of the Spirit be conspicuous in the Enterprize, which is to be managed by that Spirit. 4. Right Ends; seeing all Actions and Undertakings are specified, and so either ennobled or debased by their Ends. For it is a sort of profanation of any Undertaking that looks well, and appears worthy in the matter of it, to be prostituted to any Designs or Ends inferiour to the Person and his Work. 5. Thorow Diligence, Watchfulness, and Confidence. *Diligence* respects *Difficulty*, and is oppos'd to *Weariness*; and he that grows weary is not likely to attain his end. *Watchfulness* relates to, and connotes surprizing *Danger*; and good Beginnings may be baffled by unthought-of Hindrances. *Confidence* spirits Courage; and great things are *encountred bravely* where Success may be in prospect, through peculiar Help. 6. Clear and impartial Proceedings all the way. Irregular steps are most dishonourable things. Means and Motions ought to be answerable

to their Ends, and evidently worthy of them. No truly ſinful Steps can here be juſtified; for whatever God calls us to, he neither needs Lies nor Wickedneſs, nor any thing forbidden, as in its own nature unworthy and unwarrantable (no more do we) to bring ſuch things to paſs, as God ingages us to purſue. And therefore,

7. All muſt be done with evident and great regard to God, and to the Publick Good. *To God*; (as to his *Name*, *Will*, *Intereſt*, and *Glory*) there muſt be ſolemn and ſober Addreſſes to him, and great Submiſſions to his Providence and Pleaſure. There muſt be continual Dependence upon him; mighty, but well-grounded Expectations from him; judicious and well-temper'd Zeal for him; and (in a word) uniform Faithfulneſs and Devotedneſs to him, and to the Publick Good; as *of* him, by his Order; *under* him, as to his Conduct and Government; and *to* him, as to his Glory, as to juſt Repreſentations of him to our ſelves and others, wherein we may expect him to appear; and as to all fit Teſtimonies of our Reſpects to

him. To all which I may add, 8. There must be *Self-denial* in all fit Instances and Engagements. As to the *Publick Good*, it ought to be dearer to us than our own personal Concerns. For this indeed, if it be deliberately, vigorously, and successfully promoted, one way or other, the Benefit and Honour will be greatly ours. Defectiveness in any of these things will hazard, and may frustrate and defeat the most glorious Undertakings, and dreadfully expose the Undertakers.

§. 2. I did not seek to be God's Mouth to you, and yours to him, this day: yet did not I much withstand your Offer, because my Heart is in your worthy Work. For I well know, (and so doth God himself) that you might have chosen far better Heads and Hearts than mine, for your Instruction and Encouragement, as from the Mouth of God. But as you have chosen the Mouth, so God has sent the Message, if I mistake him not, and far be it from me *to talk deceitfully for him.* The Lord enable me to

ſpeak as from his Mouth, and as it *becomes the Oracles of God*, that I may appear before and to you, (as once a Prophet long ſince did, *viz.*) *As the Lord's Meſſenger in the Lord's Meſſage to you, ſaying, The Lord is with you, Haggai* 1. 13. For all our Accompliſhments, Aſſiſtances, Encouragements and Succeſſes, muſt be deriv'd alone from him.

§. 3. It looks not a little hopefully upon us, that ſo many worthy Perſons (rather of different Names than of contrary Spirits and Deſigns) have ſo concentred their Hearts and Purpoſes, in a Matter ſo full of God, and ſo evidently for him, as this appears to be, in my moſt ſerious and impartial Thoughts. The World, I hope, will hereby ſee, that our Hearts are one in God and Chriſt, and for their Glory and the publick Good, tho we have ſome different Sentiments about Excentricals: And I will (and I dare be free to) ſay, that thoſe excellent, learned, and ſerious Perſons, both of the Clergy and Laity of the Conformiſts, who have concern'd themſelves

in this Affair, have hereby shew'd their Readiness to strengthen each others hands for God, and are now resolved to run down (if possible) those Immoralities, Blasphemies, and Debaucheries, which give such bold and fatal Strokes at our publick Welfare and Renown. Whereupon I must and do profess, that as thereby they have been most commendably exemplary to our selves and others, so have they most deservedly entitled and endear'd themselves to our best Affections and Respects. How much more lovely is it in the sight of God and Man, to see Conformists and Nonconformists vigorously to engage themselves to cast out all the Rubbish of Profaneness, and practical Disorders, (which is disowned by the Laws of God and Man, and has been frequently discountenanc'd in these Kingdoms, by publick *Acts* and Edicts) than by their Tongues and Pens to dispute and write each other into such dangerous, unaccountable, and unwarrantable Distances, Jealousies and Discords! And I am pleas'd to see in this Affair such eminent Proofs,

Proofs, that in the Church of *England* there are more excellent and worthy Persons, than strait-lac'd and censorious Spirits may possibly imagine. To cleanse, to build, to fortify for God, under the Calls, and in the Prospects of our present Day; and under such Countenance as our present Government and Laws afford us; O! what more worthy of our Thoughts and Pains? what more delightful to the views of serious Christians? and what more awful and accountable to the Enemies of God and Christ, of serious Religion, and of the publick Good?

§. 4. As to the *chosen Text*, it will not appear so very foreign in its Sense and Import to the Design and Business of this Day, as the hasty Reader, or rash Hearer, may possibly imagine at the first view, if a few things be well considered: *viz.* that,

First, The Transgressions of this People had brought them to their terrible and disgraceful Desolations and Dispersions; *Nehem.* 1. 7. ch. 9. 26——37. Of this *Jeremy* gives us

a very *great* account in his ſo mournful Lamentations. See alſo 2 *Chron.* 7. 19, 22. And indeed the Sacred Scriptures abound with lively and copious Repreſentations and Aſſurances of this thing.

Secondly, Till they were penitent, and concernedly intent upon the Reformation-work, their Deliverance and Reſtoration were not reaſonably to be expected by them. *Levit.* 26. 40—42. *Ezek.* 43. 11. Deliverances and Salvations muſt we not look for to the Diſhonour of the God thereof, nor to the Diſadvantage of that holy Kingdom and Deſign, which the Son of God hath been, and is endeavouring to promote and finiſh.

Thirdly, They all grow ſenſible hereof: *Neh.* 1. 6—11. & 9. 32—35. No Sins now unlamented, and no Reformation now declined by them. A wicked, ſlothful, and hard-hearted People, are not receptive of what they ſeem to covet: but when they lie down in Tears and Shame before their God, and clothe themſelves with Reſolutions to do no more ſo fooliſhly, but to walk more worthy of that Di-

Divine Preſence which they ſo much affect and need; then their very Temper and Deportment moſt comfortably preſages their Mercies and deſired Salvations to be near them.

Fourthly, Their preſent Work and Aim is to prepare for the Memorials and the Reſidence of their God amongſt them: *Neh.* 2, 17. & 13, 14. *Pſal.* 122. 1——9. *Dan.* 9. 15——9. They had now known the Import of a preſent and departed God to them. They knew and felt, that when God's Temple is demoliſh'd, *Jeruſalem*'s Walls and Houſes could not ſtand; for God's Departure is impregnated with great Woes to them that loſe him. The *Sheckinah* always bears its own Charges; and where 'tis welcome, it makes Bleſſings of all kinds and ſizes to be plentiful.

Fiftbly, Walls, Temple, City, and the Peoples Habitations there, muſt be deſign'd (as they well knew) for ſomething elſe; 1 *Kings* 6. 12--14. They could not be inſenſible, of whom they were themſelves; of what a God they had to do with; and to what purpoſes he and they were to come

come and dwell together there; yea, or in what Frame and Courſe they and their God were to converſe and keep together. Hence *Zerubbabel* builds the Temple: *Ezra* endeavours to reform the People; and *Nehemiah* builds *Jeruſalem*'s Walls and Gates to ſecure all within. For who can poſſibly ſuppoſe that Temple, City, and People, ſhould be thus provided for, and ſo induſtriouſly ſecur'd without juſt reference to their God? Surely it had been much below *Nehemiah*'s excellent Senſe and Spirit, to mind a People, and to ſlight their God; *Jer.* 3. 14——18. A Man would think, that the Seventy had their eye upon this thing by their thus rendring the Text: ἡμεῖς δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ καθαροί· We are his pure Servants: *Perfectly ſeparated from Gentile Vanities, and entirely conſecrated and conſigned to our God:* καὶ οἰκοδομήσομεν· and *we will build*, as it becomes ſuch Servants, *i. e.* pure Votaries to our God: ſo far are we from thinking or deſigning any thing abſtractedly from him. And the Arabick Verſion repreſents them as ſenſible hereof, that God would

would therefore prosper them, his Servants, that they might arise and build.

§. 5. In the Text therefore are observable these things to be consider'd. 1. The confident Persons, *Nehemiah* and his People. 2. Their grounded Confidence; *The God of Heaven will prosper us.* Wherein we see what they conceiv'd concerning him: That he is *God*; the God of *Heaven*; *their* God; for they call themselves his Servants. This they were *sure* and *sensible* of; they thence inferr'd the Certainty of their Success. 3. The Resolution grounded thereupon; *We will arise and build.* 4. The Influence of their professed Faith on this their purpose; *therefore we will*, &c. 5. The free Profession of all this; *Then answered I, and said to them.* And here consider *by whom* it was made. 'Tis a discourag'd and scorn'd Seed in humane view, tho order'd and encouraged by their God. To whom? To *Sanballat*, *Tobijah*, *Geshim*, those contemptuous Scorners. *What* they profess'd; where; when; and why.

6. The

6. The Uſefulneſs of this Text to us.

I. The Confident *Perſons.*

Firſt; *Nehemiah*, whoſe Name imports Comfort from God unto his Servants; whoſe *eminent Accompliſhments* for this Work have their evidencing Inſtances in abundance; whoſe *Heart* was greatly ſet upon his Brethren and Work; and whoſe *Countenance* and *Encouragement* was wonderful from God and Providence. Indeed *Zerubbabel* the Son of *Shealtiel*, and *Joſhua* the Son of *Jozadack*, (the Prophets at *Jeruſalem* helping them) they ſet about the Temple to prepare God's Houſe for him, that ſo the Preſence and Reſidence of his Name might be fix'd and kept amongſt them: *Ezra* 5. 2. Then *Ezra* ſets upon the reforming the People by ſolemn Prayer, and proper Counſel and Perſwaſion; *Ezra* 9, & 10. And after all, *Nehemiah* ſets upon the building of the City-Walls and Gates, for the ſecurity of God's Houſe, City, and Servants; and to prevent the

Re-

Reproaches of the Heathen; *Nehem.* 2. 17. All these improve their Season and Advantages from the Indulgence of Authority, and from the Counsel and Encouragement of God's Prophets with them; and all the Remnant of the People in their respective places fall in with them to promote this Work of God, when thus accommodated for it, and encouraged to it; *Haggai* 1. 12—14. But then, not only *Nehemiah*, but also,

Secondly; His People with him, were accomplished for this great Undertaking; *Haggai* 1. 14.

1. As to *Nehemiah*, their *Leader*, and the *great Promoter* of this blessed Work, he was hearty and concern'd; sensible of God's Judgments, and the Peoples Sins; acquainted and affected with their doleful Case and State; devotional and serious with God for his good hand upon them in what they undertook; more devoted to the Interest of Religion, and of the publick Welfare, than to his own Honour or Inrichment: Valiant and vigilant to go through with what was now incumbent

cumbent on him: Prudent and circumspect in managing Things and Persons to the best advantage: Frequent in pertinent Consultations about emergent Difficulties and Dangers: Generous in his Contributions towards the promoting of this great Affair: and every way provident for Unanimity and Reformation: Much set upon it, that the House be fit for God, that the People suit God's Presence there, and that all be duly guarded.

2. As to the *People*: *They had a mind to work*, Neh. 4. 6. They *strengthned their Hands* for the Work, *Neh.* 2. 18. *Their Eyes were up to God*, Neh. 4. 9. They were *receptive* of *Instructions*, and *attentive* to the *Law*, Neh. 8. 3. and they adher'd to God and to their Superiours, *Neh.* 10. 29.

II. The *Confidence* of these *Persons*.

1. *More generally*; that what they were about was according to God's Heart: that it was pleasing to him: that *Nehemiah* and his People were thus concern'd about a Temple and Peo-

People worthy of him, and about their Preſervation in that State; that it was according to his Order; that it was according to God's Promiſe; that it was for his ſake, that he might dwell among them, be glorified by them, and appear glorious, and look like himſelf in every eye, to the effectual reſcuing of his City, Temple, Name, and Servants, from the Reproaches of the contemptuous Heathen. For how dreadfully did it look, to ſee a People, peculiarly God's, to be without God, and God himſelf to be without his Temple, and without thoſe reverent Adorations and Addreſſes from his People, and without thoſe practical Regards to him, which might diſtinguiſh them from others, and ſhew to all with what a holy God they had to do? They were alſo confident that God had ſpirited them for this thing; *Haggai* 1. 14. and that his Preſence was their Countenance and Patronage. They had his Prophets to encourage them; they had fit Leaders to influence them, and their own Spirits were prompt and reſolute to

to and in all those Endeavours and Attendances, and Pursuits, which were now so conspicuous amongst them. They were well satisfied that God would shew himself to be the *God of Heaven*, and prosper them, *answerably* to their relation to this God; and that God himself would treat them as the *Servants of the God of Heaven*. It was evident that he fix'd amongst them his Intercessors for them continually to mind him of them: And that he had poured out the Spirit of Prayer upon them. They had no doubt about *God's Name*, about *their Relation* to him, their *Interest* in him, their *Call* from him, their *Concern* for him, their being *countenanced* by his Providence; nor about the genuine *Reference* and *Subserviency* of what they now resolve upon, *unto God's Glory*, and to the *Propagation* and *Renown* of their *Religion*.

But more *particularly*, 1. The *Matter* of their Confidence was, that *God would prosper them*: *i. e.* first, they should compleat their Temple, City, Walls and Gates. That then their God would keep his Residence, as before,

fore, amongſt them. That God would countenance, promote, accept their Reformation, according to his Grant and Order, both in Church and State. That he would in and from his Holy Temple be their Glory, Guard, and Joy. That he would there accept their Suits and Offerings; give them ſuch Anſwers and Returns as they ſhould truly need; and thereby greaten both Himſelf and Them in publick view, to the aſtoniſhment of all about them. That conſequently no Enemies Attempts upon them to defeat their Work and Purpoſe ſhould be proſperous. And that all this ſhould end in the Appearance of the Lord of Glory, in his Goſpel-living Temple. O! had the City, Temple, Walls, and Gates, been built, and no God there; or had the material Buildings bounded and terminated their Deſires, their Building had been vain, and they themſelves unfit for the Patronage, Preſence, and Protection of the God of Heaven; neither had their Proſperouſneſs in their preſent Enterprize been really a Bleſſing to them. Build-

ings and People without God and Godlineſs, without Devotion and Religion, how mean would the Deſign and the Succeſs have been? How thin the Poſſeſſion? How diſhonourable and reproachful the Succeſs?

Secondly, The *Ground* of this their Confidence, *that they ſhould be proſperous*; was, 1*ſt*. God's Eminence, as the God of Heaven. Heaven is God's Throne and Reſidence; and it repreſents him as above all, and over all; and able to accompliſh and diſpenſe what he thinks fit. 2*dly*. God's *Relation* unto them. How many encouraging Relations to this People doth God own, whilſt he calls them, his *Portion*, *Children*, *Subjects*, *Heritage*, and *Jewels*? 3*dly*. God's *Preſence* with them: Witneſs his Spirit, Prophets, Providences, *&c*. 4*thly*. God's own *Concern* and *Intereſt* in this their preſent Work: for he deſign'd them to be the People of his Preſence, Choice and Joy, and accordingly by ſpecial Favours to ſignalize them as ſuch. And, 5*thly*. His *antient Promiſe* to them. And, O! what Holds are theſe for Faith and Hope? How will they

they animate and invigorate our Prayers and Confidence, our Diligence and Reſolution, when we are called out to act for God!

III. Their Reſolution hereupon.

1. *We will ariſe and build*, Neh. 2. 17, 20. They fix their Purpoſes. They thought it not enough to mourn, faſt, pray, profeſs, or ſeriouſly to repreſent their Caſe to God: Nor would they heſitate or deſiſt. God needs not us, but we need him. Yet if there be any Abilities, Accommodations, Opportunities, Warrant and Encouragements, our order'd Province is to be minded by us, and our determined and appointed Work reſolved upon: For Reſolution is to iſſue into Action. This turns and fixes the bent and biaſs of our Souls and Motions. Man is fit for nothing, till Reſolution ſets him out: Men unreſolved are unſtable; *James* 1. 8.

2. This we will do, *as we are God's Servants*, and *becauſe* we are ſo; *Neh.* 1. 10, 11. *Ezra* 5. 9—11. All muſt be done *by order* from on high, *in conſcience*

ſcience of it, and *according to* it. They did not look upon their preſent Purpoſe and Employment as an arbitrary thing; as if it were left with them whether to build or no; or to build as they liſt. God's Will and Favour were the great Enforcements of this Purpoſe. Humour and Will did not here thwart or baffle Conſcience; but all lay proſtrate at the foot of Conſcience, as that reſpected God's Authority and Order; and all was commanded and directed by that regent Principle. Men do not otherwiſe act *as Servants.*

3. Their high and awful Thoughts of God gave Life and Spirit to this their worthy Reſolution; and well it might; for where God is, all muſt be proſperous: Nothing can ſtand againſt him, or before him, to defeat his Purpoſes and Counſels, *Rom.* 8. 31. *Numb.* 14. 9. They ſaw whoſe Patronage, Help and Preſence they might rely upon. This made them fixed and fearleſs, and unwearied till their Work was done.

IV. The

IV. The Influence of their Confidence upon their *Purpoſe.*

1. This made their Reſolution to be *rational: Therefore* we will build. Rational Reſolution will be conſtant. 'Tis no ſmall ſatisfaction to know upon what Ground we ſtand; or what we enterprize, and why. What! ſuch a God! ſo great! ſo wiſe! ſo good! ſo true, and faithful! We *his* Servants! and ſuch Succeſs in proſpect! What are Enemies, Difficulties, Coſt or Pains hereto!

2. This *fix'd* their Purpoſes at once. The Cogency hereof could not but preſerve an equal Tenour; for God is evermore the ſame. He never can deny himſelf, 2 *Tim.* 2. 13. They had here the ſame cogent Arguments and Motives to urge their continuance in their Work, which they had to prompt them to begin it. Clear Apprehenſions of God's Immutability will greatly eſtabliſh the Reſolutions of his Servants.

3. This ſweetned all their Pains and Dangers, and ſet their ſpeedy, joy-

ful End and Iſſue in their clear and conſtant Proſpect; for all their Enemies that oppos'd this thing, did but expoſe themſelves thereby. None can be proſperous, they knew, that harden'd themſelves againſt the God of Heaven; nor can that Work miſcarry, nor that Hope prove abortive, which God eſpouſes, and attends with a propitious Eye.

V. The fit and free Profeſſion of all this.

1. The Profeſſors were a deſpiſed and diſcouraged Seed, under Correction for their Crimes. God had let looſe their Enemies upon them, and ſuffered them to lay all waſte before them; and the Spirit of Enmity againſt them in their Enemies was not yet extinct; *Ezra* 5. 12. *Neh.* 2. 17, 19. & 4. 1—4, 8, 11. & 9. 36, 37. *Jeremy's Lamentations* afford us a ſad Mirrour of their dreadful and deplorable Condition.

2. The things profeſſed by them were all diſtaſteful to their Heathen Enemies: Their *Faith*, that their God

God was in Heaven, where Pagans Gods are not: Their *Relation* to this God, that they were *his Servants*, and therefore ow'd no Service to their Pagan Gods: Their *Reſolution*, that they would ariſe and build for God; for they'd admit no Rival nor Peerage with their God in this Concern: which made this good Man briskly tell his Enemies, that they had *no Memorial*, *Right*, nor *Portion* in *Jeruſalem*. As for God's Grandeur in *Jeruſalem*, and his Reſidence and Worſhip in his Temple there, this they knew would eclipſe all their Pagan Glories. And then *their gathering to their own Land* could not be pleaſing to their inſulting Enemies. And, laſtly, Their *profeſſed Confidence* in this God, and their *expectation of Succeſs from him*, ſeem'd to import, yea, plainly ſpake it, that they took their Adverſaries to be as nothing in God's hands; *Neh.* 4. 14.

3. This they profeſſed, when moſt oppos'd and ſcorn'd; *Then* anſwer'd I them. Something of parallel hereto we find in *Dan.* 3. 16—18. & 6. 6--10. They acted now, as under the Senſe

and Power of what we have upon Record in *Isa.* 8. 12—14. & 41. 10—16. & 51. 12, 13. & 40. 25—31.

4. They had great Purposes and Reaches in their eyes in this Profession; 1 *Pet.* 3. 14—16. & *Ezra* 5. 11, 12. This their Profession seems to be animated by that Spirit of *Love*, of *Power*, and of a *sound Mind*, which we find mentioned in 2 *Tim.* 1. 7. And it look'd well and providently every way. 1*st.* Toward *God* himself; As the God that they would sanctify, and had so profound a Reverence to: this spake them tender of his Honour, and heartily devoted to the glorifying of his Name. For they hereby were solicitous that all should know, that the God of Heaven, and of *Israel*, had no Equal. 2*dly.* It reflected greatly on *God's* Enemies: For did they know the God which they confronted by hindring the Builders and the Building, they would rather roll themselves in Dust, than engage their Tongues or Hands against that Being which so infinitely transcends them. 3*dly.* It look'd greatly at the *once captive*, but *now returning* Jews.

It

It miniſtred to their continual Encouragement, that the God of Heaven was even riding in the heights of Heaven, to bring them to, and fix them in their own Land and City, and to enable them to compleat their undertaken Work. *4thly.* It look'd greatly at this great Profeſſor, *Nehemiah* himſelf: for his Profeſſion made it clear how much he valued himſelf, and promiſed to his People and himſelf from his Relation to this God, and from the Conduct, Government, and Kindneſs of this God to him, whom he had choſen to carry on this Work. *5thly.* It look'd greatly at their approaching Privileges and inſtant Mercies; *This is our God*, who is the *God of Heaven.* And O the ſparklings of his heavenly Glory, which we ſhall ſee to our great Benefit and Pleaſure in the great Glories of his rebuilt Temple, and repaired Walls and City! *6thly.* This look'd greatly at their preſent Work; for it was their own concocting and digeſting of all thoſe Miniſtries to their Courage and Endeavours, of which their Senſe of God was as the Life and Strength.

Their

Their Hearts would faint, their Hands grow feeble, their Thoughts would be confounded, their Expectations would be baffled, and their Spirits ſtript of Courage; were not all theſe reviv'd upon them by this great Name, which they ſo pertinently and prudently profeſs'd. 7*thly*. This look'd greatly at their *own endanger'd Frame*. Their Enemies were many, they themſelves but few. Their Enemies were crafty, buſy, and malignant, whereby they were but as Sheep amongſt the Wolves. But when they ſet this God againſt their Enemies, they readily could conclude, that all their Enemies would be found Liars, as to God and them. And, 8*thly*. It look'd as greatly at that Reformation which muſt be vigorouſly carried on in order to their getting, keeping, pleaſing, and honouring their God. They knew that the refining of Mens Spirits, and the reforming of their Lives, were as removing Mountains, and as raiſing Perſons from the Dead. It is no eaſy Enterprize to oppoſe Sinners againſt their Intereſts, and againſt their ſtrong

ſtrong Corruptions; and to bring Men off from all their darling Luſts and Follies. But when they knew that the God of Heaven could make them ſtrong and proſperous; whatever might appear exceeding difficult, could not be thought impoſſible.

VI. The Doctrinal Import of this to us.

Doct. 1. That which the God of Heaven will proſper in their hands, his Servants ſhould reſolve on and promote. Be the thing enterprized never ſo difficult, coſtly, or unlikely to ſucceed in humane thought or view, yet if God order it, and expect it from us, as we are his Servants; and if he intimates his purpoſe to ſucceed us, we muſt not be diſcouraged or remiſs. This great and glorious Undertaking to repair the Temple, City, Walls, and to reform the People, how intricate and perplexing was it found when once engag'd in by *Zerubbabel*, *Joſhua*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and all the Remnant of the People? Contemptuous Scorners deſpis'd them, and reproach'd

proach'd them: Pretenders offer to work with them, with the greater Subtlety and Secresy, to confound and hinder them: The People of the Land disturb them, and hire Counsellors to frustrate this their purpose: These (in confederacy with others) misrepresent them to the King: and they provoke him to reverse his Order issued out to build; and they accordingly prevail. And thus the Work was made to cease by Force and Power; *Ezra* 4. When they obtain'd a new Commission from the God of Heaven (or rather the Revival of a former Order) by *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, God's Prophets; this also was enquired into, censur'd, and inform'd against by *Tatnai*, and *Shethar-Boznai*: but yet the Elders kept up their Spirit, Purpose, and Profession; and they went on boldly in their Work. After this they had mercenary Persons, who by Prophecies and crafty Insinuations of instant Enemies and Dangers, endeavour'd to obstruct their Progress; and all this under great pretence of Friendship, tho they design'd hereby to influence

these

theſe Builders and Reformers into a Diſtruſt of God, a contracting a Diſhonour to themſelves, and turning ſcandalous to the People: Yet notwithſtanding this, the Wall was finiſhed. And (if ſome ſay true) a Counter-Temple and Religion at *Samaria* was adviſed to, to divide them: which was accordingly accompliſh'd, as *Joſephus* tells us, *Jud. Antiq. lib.* 11. *cap.* 8. And *Manaſſeh* (who was Grandchild to *Eliaſhib* the High Prieſt, and Son-in-law to *Sanballat*) was made their Prieſt, by the Solicitation of *Sanballat*, that ſo *Manaſſeh* might not put away *Sanballat*'s Daughter, his Wife, as the Elders of the Jews required. See Biſhop *Uſher*'s *Annal. ad Ann.* 4381. *ex Joſepho.* Hence all revolted thither who would not quit their ſtrange Wives. From all this 'tis moſt evident, that theſe, in conſcience of their Duty to God, and of their Encouragements from God, went on to build; and that they look'd upon all their Enemies and Affronts but as the Trial of their Faith and Courage. And this, in the Doctrine of it, reaches us, who have this day diſcern'd

cern'd our Duty, and eſpous'd it; and who here preſent our ſelves before the Lord, to bewail the Demoliſhments of our Walls and Temple, and our Reproaches conſequent thereupon; to conſider and confeſs our Sins, whoſe Sinfulneſs is ſo viſible in theſe our Deſolations; to profeſs our concurrent ſolemn Reſolutions, to ſet upon Reparation-work; to intreat God's Bleſſing upon our purpoſed and commenced Reformations; and to make known to all, our Relation to God, our Confidence in him, our Zeal for him, our Dependence on him, and our great Expectations from him: and to teſtify to all, in whom, in what, and to what purpoſes we (tho differing in Sentiments as to ſome ſmaller things of ritual Conſideration and Concern) do now unite as Brethren, to love, encourage, and aſſiſt each other, *as one in God and Chriſt*, to run down Immoralities, and to reduce Men to that viſibly orderly Behaviour which may conciliate to our Religion (our Chriſtianity) its juſt and genuine Reputation; and to make *us Proteſtants* more exemplary, and

and leſs ſcandalous even in the eyes of *Rome* it ſelf. And ſhall we be diſcouraged by any thing, from attempting to reſcue our profeſs'd Religion from the Reproaches of the Pagan, Antichriſtian, Papal World? What can be more *of God* than what is *for him?* And what can be more *for God* than what is *of him?* And when can we expect his Preſence, Patronage, Countenance, and our Succeſs from him, if *not* when we become all Spirit and Vigour againſt what he hath ſo frequently and ſolemnly remonſtrated unto; and for what he hath told us, that he has prepared a Hell; and upon what he hath left upon Record, the Hiſtory of ſo many executed (and thoſe ſo very tremendous) Judgments? By which 'tis evident what he hath moſt eſpouſed, and doth ſo evidently ſet his Heart upon. No Man (I hope) of a greater Latitude and Candour for free Thoughts, and Searches, and Expreſſions, than my ſelf, when I ſee them attended with fit Modeſty and Self-ſuſpicion, and a true evident Concern for ſerious Dealings with God, and for practical Chriſ-

Christian Godliness, in those who differ from me in doubtful and inferiour things. God himself knows how far I am distrustful of my own Judgment, the Weakness whereof doth cost me many a serious, sad, self-humbling Thought, in both my Solitudes and in Conversation. Yet other Mens Passions and discouraging Reflections upon me, will never make my Judgment better, tho they fill my Heart with Grief, and force me to lament my self, and to refer them to themselves, and to *their* Judg and *mine*. But yet I see no reason that bold-fac'd Atheism, Infidelity, Anti-scripturism, and the daring ridiculing of the Eternal Word and Son of God, should escape their deserved Censures, so far as liable thereunto by the Laws of God and Man. For of such things I hear from others, tho I have met with none my self. I would not have every Objection, modestly and discreetly offer'd, and closely urg'd in its full Strength in order to its fit Resolution, to be accounted culpable. Modest Inquiries and Proposals are vastly different from industrious design'd Propagations

gations of Errors, and from ſcurrilous and blaſphemous Reflections upon the Godhead of the Lord of Glory. So far as I can find, too much in Sacred Writ is *attributed* and aſcribed to Chriſt by *God himſelf*; too much is *arrogated*, *claimed*, and *aſſumed* by *Chriſt* unto *himſelf*; too much has been *predicted* of him by the *Prophets*; yea, and too much has been *aſſerted*, *received*, *expected*, and *atteſted* by his *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* in their day, to leave it poſſible for me to think him a *mere Creature*, or any thing leſs than the *Eternal Word* and *Son of God*. To which I will take liberty to add, that how the Univerſal Government and Judgment ſhould be ſafely committed to and left with a mere Creature, or with one that could not judg the World without a Prompter, quite exceeds my Underſtanding. But as to Blaſphemies, Profanations of Holy Days and Inſtitutions, abuſing thoſe who miniſter therein; Debaucheries, Intemperance, carnal Pollutions, expoſing Sacred Words and Things to Scorn, unſeaſonable hauntings of Publick-houſes; yea, all things tending to

debauch Youth, or others, these God would have rebuked and exposed to Punishment and Shame.

Doct. 2. High Thoughts of God should evermore attend great Undertakings for him. It is in his Name, for his Sake, to his Praise, and by his Order, that we go forth to serve him comfortably any way. Where then is our Confidence and Courage? Where is the Strength and Cogency of our Motives, if God be meanly thought on by us? He that misrepresents his God to himself, dispirits all that is to move him to his Work; and dilutes every thing that is derived from God. We are not self-sufficient; our Difficulties, Adversaries, and Perplexities, will be found manifold and mighty. Perfidiousness will be frequent. We our selves shall faint and be discouraged, if our due Sense of God do not animate our Endeavours. Whence otherwise can we derive our Conduct, Courage, Strength, Protection or Success? How can we think or hope to fetch down Gigantick Wickedness, or to stem the Tide of rampant Immorality

morality and Profaneness, (which hath so many subtle, potent, and malignant Patrons and Abettors of it, who through long Custom are hardned therein) but by our dependence upon that God whose Name we reverence and adore? And how shall we preserve our Bow in strength, and invigorate our Purposes and Courage, to oppose Debauchery and Immorality, but by our actuated Thoughts of our *exalted* God in our *own* Spirits; and by our setting off his Eminence against all the formidable Aspects of Sin's Votaries and Champions; and against the discouraging Prospects of that Cost and Danger whereto our espoused Enterprize may expose us?

Doct. 3. Great Expectations from God will give great Life and Spirit to noble Actions and Enterprizes for God. High Hopes will make our Spirits truly Heroick, and inspire and fortify the bravest Resolutions for generous and great Actions and Acquests. God eyed as *for us*, *near us*, and *before us*, as with his *Eye* and *Reward*, will make us fearless and unmoveable,

moveable, and greatly eager in the pursuit of what concerns his Laws and Glory. Certain Acceptance and Success must needs have cogent Influences upon considerate Souls. Lively Hopes make thorow Work: *God will prosper, and therefore we will build.* The God we hope to live with, and whom now we serve, hath neither Heart nor Heaven (we know) for Immorality. He is the God, and Heaven the State, and Holiness the Frame and Course; and Christ the Patron; the Law of God the Rule; his Promises the Encouragement; his Presence, Providence, and Spirit, the Promoters and Countenancers of all due Order, and of all beautiful Conversation: And *Satan* is the Enemy, and Hell the Sink and End of all that is against this. He therefore that expects the Patronage and Kindness of his God, and that understands wherein these must consist and fix, here and hereafter, will heartily endeavour the extirpation of all things irreceptive of God's Countenance and Reward. They that make God their All, that have placed their Hearts in Heaven, and know the

the stated Laws of Expectation: They that have well considered the Repugnancy of Sin unto, and its inconsistence with the holy Nature, Will, and Interest of God; with the true Health, the great Beauty and genuine Pleasure of humane Souls; with the due Grandeur and Designs of Divine Government; (which is indeed the Illustration of Divine Excellencies in the true Constitution and Conduct of what relates unto the Sons of Men, suitably to their Author, Make, Capacity, and End) *these*, as they expect Success in what is *of* and *for* this God, so will they engage and act accordingly.

Doct. 4. What we believe, expect, and purpose, with respect to God, should be as freely owned and professed by us, as others testify their Scorns and Enmity against God. *Act.* 24. 14. 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. Great Enterprizes ought to be seconded with brisk and bold Profession when the case requires it. *Ezra* 5. 11, 12. Thus in the Text, *Then answered I them*, &c. See *Dan.* 3. 16—18. Mind here what

was profess'd: 1st. That their God was the *God of Heaven*, and so was not the God of their Enemies. 2dly. That they were *the Servants of this God*; and thus were their *Enemies Gods* disclaimed. 3dly. That they were *resolved to build for God*. And thus the *Oppositions* of their Idolatrous Enemies were (in the sober Sense of God) confronted by them. 4thly. That the *God of Heaven would prosper them*. Thus were their *Enemies*, and their *Gods* despised by them, as too impotent to help or hinder them. 5thly. All this was *boldly owned* by them when most *despised* and *derided* by their Enemies; and those too some of the *greatest* of them. And thus their Scorn and Rage were represented to their Fates as most despicable things, because of the Patronage of the highest Being. What may justify your Work, will equally justify your Confidence and Profession. Shall we not be as bold for God as others are against him? Where lie the odds? Deut. 33. 26——29. Zech. 4. 6, 7.

Dear

Doct. 5. Our Purposes and Practices ought to agree with our Relations, Stations, and Professions; *Tit.* 1. 16. *Neh.* 5. 9. This *great Reformer* gives the Answer, makes the Profession, reforms the People, incourages the Work, addresses to and eyes his God, rebukes the Immoralities of his Followers, brings them to observe, and own, and praise their God, in the Advances of their Work. And he acts answerably to his *Station*, as a *Magistrate*; to his *Circumstances*, as a *rich Man*; to his *Relation*, as *God's Servant*; to his *Obligations*, as the Survivor of a long Captivity; as attended with *gracious Providences*, and as his *Prince's Favourite*, to the best Advantage both of Church and State.

VII. Practical Reflections on the whole.

1. See hence who are the fittest Persons to appear and act for God: Those that are *hearty Servants*; Those that have *great Thoughts of God*: And those that most *depend on God*

for their *Conduct*, *Protection*, and *Success*.

2. See hence what such are most intent upon: *Psal.* 137. 5, 6. *Hag.* 1. 2——8. *Neh.* 2. 3. Building for God, and for his People; doing what may distinguish, credit, and secure *Jerusalem*, and God's Worship, Truth, and People there: and indeed nothing but what may well become the Patronage, Presence, and Incouragements of the God of Heaven. *Numb.* 25. 11——13.

3. See hence what *advanced Thoughts* of God, and of *fit Confidence* in him, and of *great Expectations* from him, will make Men do: *viz.* these will fix their Purposes, fire their Zeal for orderly Behaviour, spirit their Diligence, embolden their Looks and Speeches, and make God's Servants keep their ground, and to mind their hits and helps.

4. See hence how a few Men of Place and Figure, by their exemplary Wisdom, Zeal and Diligence, may influence the Body of a People. They may be as their *Eye*, their *Heart*, their *Hand*, and *Mouth*. We see how *Nehemiah* could speak as in the

Name

Name of all, and for them; and draw the rest after him.

5. See hence what it is to appear and act for God, and for the Good of his *Jerusalem*, from *Principles of Conscience* and *Religion*. *Self* is here laid aside, and melted down into the Interest and Order of the Publick, even of *Jerusalem*. It is not well with such in their own Thoughts, unless and until Publick Affairs go prosperously on. *Psal.* 137. 5, 6.

6. See hence what a true Estimate of God's City, and of his Temple-presence there, will prompt and reconcile his Servants to. Nothing is thought too great, too good, too much, as to Diligence, Cost, Hazard, Watchfulness, and Adventures, to set all right towards God and Man; to reform Mens Lives and Manners, that thus God and his People may delightfully dwell together. This speaks the God of Heaven well known, and greatly valued by his People.

VIII. A word of Exhortation to Reformers, and that to these few things.

1. To *Consider themselves*. Luke 14. 28——32. and that in several respects: 1*st*. As to *your God*. For 'tis for him that you arise and build: *his* you are; *for him* you enterprize your present Work; *under his Eye* you are at work; *to him* you are accountable; *according to his Order* you must act; *on him* you must attend and bear your selves; *to him* you must resort; and *from himself* must you receive your fit Reward. Think then *with what a God* you have to do; *whose Presence* you desire and prepare for; *whose Work* you are about; and to *whose Will and Service* you would reduce this dissolute, profane, debauch'd, immoral Generation. 2*dly*. As *to your selves*. Consider well *from what Principles* you act; *what* you have in your Eye as your great Design and Scope; *by what Rule* you intend to walk; and then *what Life* and *Strength* is put into your so generous,

rous, weighty and warrantable Resolution. 3dly, As to your compassed Work before you: Ruins here call for Lamentation; Breaches for Reparation; Rubbish for Rejection; Dangers for Watchfulness; long, tedious, and much Work, for Patience; Scoffs and Conflicts for great Resolution; different Humours, Stations, Circumstances, and Degrees and Kinds of Crimes, for much Wisdom and Discretion; subtile Counter-mines, Evasions and Excuses, for serious, prudent, deep and clear Discoveries and Thoughts; and all your Procedures and Successes, for Observations and Acknowledgments. And seeing so many Eyes may be fix'd upon you, what strict Self-discipline and exemplary Blamelessness ought you to have? And I need not tell you, what necessity is incumbent on you for solemn frequent Prayer to God, for your Conduct, Safety, Incouragement, and Success from him in this Concern. Here then consider well what you may ask and urge; and how you may obtain and use what such Addresses may bring in.

2. To

2. *To Confidence in God.* That you shall not be Losers, nor deserted by him in this thing. *Hag.* 1. 13. The *God of Heaven* will help you. The *Son of God* will speak and plead for you. The *Spirit of God* will cherish and inflame what he implants and kindles in you. For all the Immoralities which you are labouring to suppress, are grievous to him, and a great hindrance to his Work. *God's Providence* will not neglect you. You have (*ceteris paribus*) the *Prospect* and *Assurance* of your Great Master's *Euge* and *Reward*. True *Peace of Conscience* will attend you in these your resolute and regular Purposes and Engagements for your God. The very *Consciences of the Dissolute* are against themselves for you; and their future *Tongues* and *State* will justify your Zeal and Faithfulness at Death, or in the day of Judgment. God will be every way your Friend; and they that know his Name may chearfully and safely trust him in his way. *Set but your God before you always, and you need not be moved.* O let not these incouraging Consolations be neglected, unconcocted,

ed, indigested, or accounted small! Your ſolemn Thoughts muſt help your Confidence, your Confidence muſt fix your Purpoſe, and quicken you to and in your Work. Did we but make more reckoning of God, as the *God of Heaven*, and as *our God*, he would more gloriouſly ſhew himſelf for us. There would be more Experience of him undoubtedly, were there more regular and actuated Expectation from him; *Iſa.* 26. 3, 4.

3. *To Reſolution for God.* Acts 11. 23. *Neh.* 6. 11. And let thoſe Words of Truth and Soberneſs be well conſidered, which you find in *Jam.* 1. 5——11. Fix'd and ſtrong Reſolution is as the Root and Life of generous and great Actions. I verily perſwade my ſelf, that I ſpeak to Principles when I ſpeak to you. I am (I hope) both a Stranger and an Enemy to Flattery. So far as I can underſtand, this glorious and hopeful Project was no ſooner contrived, eſpouſed, and ſet on foot by Gentlemen of the Church of *England*, as to their ſtated Communion, and *ſuch* in *Faithfulneſs to their own Judgment*, than it was readily

readily contracted with by others called Dissenters; but we are all one in Christ, and Members each of other. And being now convened in this great Purpose and Concern, I hope we shall go on, both towards Heaven, and Peace in Heaven; and make it evident to all, that our differing Sentiments in some other Matters will not extinguish or abate reciprocal Affections and Respects, nor make any Breaches or Incroachments upon any fit Civilities of Conversation; nor upon any Articles of mutual Helpfulness as to the Publick Good, or our Civil Concerns with one another. Such large and noble Souls are lovely things indeed, both in the sight of God and Man, as can make all yield to weighty things, and make us candidly and respectfully to converse and act together, to stem that Tide of Wickedness and Profaneness which threatens so apparently to ruin the Welfare and Renown of Church and State. See *Hos.* 4. 1—3. *Jer.* 7. 8—16. & 5. 5, 27—29. *Ezek.* 22. Bold Sinners, and an angry God; great Crimes attended with notorious Impenitencies;

penitencies, and grievous judgments, are dreadful things when found together; *Lev.* 26. 26—28. *Isa.* 1. 2—6. Let then your Fear of God, and your Pity to the Land, and to the Souls of Men, excite and fix you.

4. To your mutual strengthning of each others Hands in this great Work and Purpose; *Heb.* 10. 24. You have great Incouragements from God and Christ, from Heaven and Earth, from the Laws of God and Man, and from the publick Professions of Transgressors, who stand up at the Creed; who cry, *Incline our Hearts to keep this Law*; and that in solemn Assemblies; and who do not deny *that God, that Christ, that Gospel*, which testify and protest against the very Crimes which they so shamelesly commit and perpetrate. None so deserving of Rebukes and Punishments from God, as they that sin against the very Letter of those Laws which they profess to be Divine, and which are no way controverted amongst themselves. Set but their professed Principles against those their Practices, which contradict such Principles; shew but the Inconsistencies

sistencies of these Mens Principles and Practices with one another; and then urge them closely, to shew to all which of these two must be deserted and denied by them. We may put Spirit thus into each other, and God will own and patronize us all.

5. To discourage all those Principles and Doctrines (as far as regularly you can) which minister to these Immoralities. *Rev.* 2. 14. *Tit.* 1. 9—16. 1 *Tim.* 6. 3. *Jude* 3, 4. He that shall teach, There is no God, no Providence, no future Judgment, and consequently neither Heaven nor Hell: He that shall propagate such Doctrines as these, that Souls are mortal; that Christ is not the Son of God; that Man is but a finer sort of Brute, *&c.* he ought to be stopp'd in such Careers. For if these be true, and credited accordingly, then all Religion and Morality comes down at once. All *then* must be *lawful* that may be *safely* done, as to humane Vices and Injuriousness.

6. To walk prudently and blamelessly your selves in all things. *Phil.* 2. 14, 15. *Neh.* 5. 9. It is but reasonable

ble for you to expect all sorts of Eyes upon you. They whom you prosecute for their Immoralities, will thereby be awakened and irritated to their severer Observations of you. And should they (which I hope they never will, and beg of God and you they never may) ever find you guilty of the same Sins, or of equivalent Crimes to what you proceed against them for, you may conclude that your Miscarriages will be *told in Gath*, with all imaginable Aggravations, to your Reproach, and to their Joy: and God himself will justly make you base before the People; in that as God and others expected other things from you, so may you look for such Returns upon you from his displeased and incensed (because more reproached) Majesty, as shall abundantly demonstrate, that *with him there is no respect of Persons*; and that *your Profession of God and Christ, and your Endeavours to suppress Sin in others, shall not commute for your dishonouring of God, and for your being scandalous unto others*, by your own personal Transgressions. Nor is your perso-

nal Blameleſſneſs, as to Immoralities, ſufficient for you in this matter, but you muſt alſo ſee that all your Diligence, Zeal and Courage, have their due Conduct, and be every way (as far as in you lies) accountable to God and Man. Bear with me in this faithful Freedom with you: This Caution is not given you from Accuſation or Sulpicion of any one amongſt you. All that is poſſible doth not come to paſs; but you are Men, and in the World and Body.

IX. A word to the Immoral and Profane.

Could I intreat you ſeriouſly to read *Deut.* 27. 9——26. and *there* and *then* conſider the *Sins* there doomed to a ſolemn publick Curſe; the *God* who hates thoſe *Sins*, and who will execute the Curſe where-ever he ſees thoſe Sins committed; the *Motive* offered and urged there; and *God's inſiſting upon univerſal Obedience* to his Laws, with the Encouragements which he affords thereto, in *Deut.* 28. 1—13. Could I obtain of you to lay to heart

 that

that peremptory Word, with the hiſtorical occaſion of it, in *Levit.* 24. 10——16. *Whoſoever curſeth his God ſhall bear his Sin: and he that blaſphemeth the Name of the Lord ſhall die.* Could I prevail with you to paule upon God's *publiſhed* Reſolution, *not to hold him guiltleſs* (nor to free him from his Wrath) *who taketh his Name in vain*, Exod. 20. 7. I might then hope that your Reverence towards God, and your Self-love and Care might keep you orderly and ſafe. Uncleanneſs, Intemperance, Rudeneſs and Profaneneſs, are ſuch debaſing and unworthy things, as that ſerious Thoughts could not but move you to abhor them. Are not your Tongues, your Souls and Bodies, *his, who made and bought them?* Were they created and redeemed, Are they protected, maintained, accommodated, and encouraged, to be alienated from their Proprietor, and to be profaned and abuſed before him? Can any thing be pleaded for your Sins which may be juſtified at your own Tribunal? Or can the Gain and Pleaſure of your Crimes compenſate

what you are sure to lose, and to bring upon your selves thereby? If there be no God, no future State, how came you by your Beings, and by all your suitable Provisions for their universal Welfare? But if there be a God, and a future State, hath he made *that* and *you* to be eternally his own Reproach? Or do you think God made his Laws in vain? Or that Heaven can bear or suit with your present Frame and Course? Or that God *needs* or *fears* you, so as to save you with a Lie in his own Mouth, or to confront him in the Heavenly State, or to let you provoke him whilst you live here, and then to change you, and to save you when you die? Your Reformation will be your Credit and Safety, and our great Ease and Joy.

It can be no way pleasing to the sober Mind, or to Men of Peace, intent upon their own Interest, Quietness and Safety *here*, to minister to Contentions, or to irritate your Passions, by thwarting and exposing you to publick Censures, or by reproving you, tho in secret; were they not conscious to themselves of these things,

of *God's strict Observations* both of them and you; of the *accurate Laws* by which he will judg us all; of the *Solemnity* and *Impartiality* of that Judgment; of the *Importance* of the future State to all; of the *terrible Reviews* and *Censures* which *your* and *their* awakened Consciences, (by the so sensible Approaches and Instancy of *Eternity* on a Death-bed, *wherein* we can look for nothing but the Severities of Divine Revenges) will make upon all Follies and Neglects: Of those most *intimate* and *sharp Resentments* which our Great Judg cannot but have of all your notorious and aggravated Crimes, which have so boldly and provokingly confronted him in the whole Constitution and Procedures of his Government and Designs: Of some *possibility of reclaiming you*, and of *reducing you to God* and *Christ*: and of the *notice* which God and Christ will take of them, as they behave themselves in this Affair towards you. They do believe the Articles of the Christian Faith. They know those Rules of holy and orderly Deport-

ment towards God, themſelves, and others, by which they muſt be governed and judged. They are very apprehenſive of their Sacramental Vows and Ties to be true to God and Chriſt, and you. They have ſeen the tragical and diſmal Concluſions of debauched and immoral Lives. They clearly do diſcern the dreadful Influences of ſuch Lives upon the publick Peace and Welfare. They are not ignorant of thoſe moſt rueful Deſolations of Perſons, Families, Churches, Kingdoms and Societies, which diſſolute Spirits and Practices have produced and multiplied. And they are well ſatisfied that the Prevention or Removal of God's Judgments, and the procuring and continuance of his bleſſing Preſence with us, can never rationally be expected but in the way of univerſal penitent Reformation, and evident Return to God. And they would be glad to know but in what Frame and Mirrour you would behold and face your ſelves. Do but reflect upon *what you are:* And can you think it orderly and accountable (even to your own impar-

impartial ſelves) that Men ſhould brutify themſelves? That rational Souls ſhould proſtitute their ſo noble Faculties and Powers to the ſo ſordid and mean Intereſts and Satisfactions of intemperate Fleſh? Shall that lie wallowing in the Mire, with the Self-defiling Brute, which might ſo gratefully and commendably exert and illuſtrate its own Authorities and Vigours in the due Management of its ſo very uſeful Body? *Luſt* and *Intemperance* are a great profanation of that ſo curiouſly contrived and compacted Manſion which is conſigned to the Soul to live in, and to improve, to its own true and great Advantage. And for the *Tongue*, which is the Soul's Orator and Interpreter, to repreſent its *Excellence* and *Senſe of things* to all; muſt *that* be uſed to viler Purpoſes, even to proclaim your Transformation into a deviliſh Frame and Nature? Doth it become a Creature to blaſpheme and curſe its God, to imprecate his Anger, to contend with the Author of it ſelf, and to ſhew more Enmity and leſs Reve-

rence to him, than Pagans will or dare to do unto their false Gods? What need of Oaths and Blasphemies in humane Conversation? Such things are no ways fitly expressive of noble Extraction, of genteel Education, of improved Parts, of exquisite Learning, or of endearing Principles and Dispositions; nor yet of considerable Usefulness and Figure in Church or State.

Do but reflect upon *whose you are*. You are *God's own*, as to *Property*, *Obligation*, and *Accountableness*, whether you will or no: Nor can you divest him of his Right to use you as he pleases; tho you may possibly spoil your Title, and implead all Claims unto his Favour and Rewards. And now, must that be used against him which is more *His* than Yours? Or can you think your selves to be of such Ability and Figure, as to hector, curse, or flatter him out of his own Throne and Rights? Can you implead his righteous Sentence, or prevent its execution, when doomed by him to Hell?

Do but reflect upon *where you are*; even in that *World* and *Body*, wherein you have not long to ſtay; but you have much to do and be, in order to your everlaſting Miſery or Happineſs. This World is but a Pilgrim-ſtate. Your Fleſh is as the Graſs or Shadow. Your carnal Pleaſures are but Dotages, Dreams, and Snares. Your Blaſphemies, Curſings, Oaths, and rants of Speech; your ſwelling Words of Vanity are but Self-cruelty and Reproach, and the haſtening and enflaming of that Divine Vengeance, which, when inflicted on you, will convince you to the purpoſe, of how unfit a Match you are for an intenſed and ingaged God againſt you. Your bold Affronts to God and Chriſt, ſpeak you either ignorant of, or unacquainted with, and inconſiderate about *your ſelves* and *Them*. Nor can I think on any thing whereto you can aſcribe your preſent Peace, but to your contracted and judicial Stupidneſs; which is, I think, the greateſt Plague on this ſide Hell. Hard-heartedneſs and Fearleſſneſs are productive

ductive of Careleſſneſs and Preſumption. Theſe ripen Souls apace for Hell; and they will be found as the drying of the Stubble for the Flames of the infernal Pit, wherein the Terrors of Revenges will ſurprize and ſcorch ſuch Sinners moſt ſeverely. And ſhall this preſent State, and Scantling of probationary time only be ſpent in what is moſt like to ſhorten it, to ruin you, to ſtrike profanely at both Majeſty and Mercy, and to prevent your own Salvation, by making it unbecoming God and Chriſt to ſave you from eternal Wrath? And ſhall others fear or love you more than they love God and Chriſt? And muſt they tamely give up all God's Rights, leſt you ſhould thereby be diſpleaſed and ſtopt (tho regularly) in your attempted Rapes upon all that is Orderly and Sacred? You know your time is ſhort; that it is given you by God, purchaſed by Chriſt, and filled with what may help you to a better State. And is this the beſt Improvement of what you are entruſted with ſo kindly, to curſe and

ſwear,

swear, to profane Holy Time and Things, and to drench your selves in such prodigious Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, who are to perfect Holiness in the fear of God? O tell us seriously, or ask your selves in your sober Thoughts; to whom, to what, are you thus most attempered? Think you that there is so little difference betwixt God and Satan, Heaven and Hell, as that the Spirit and Practice of the one can be congenial with the other? Think therefore most composedly upon *Who it is that instigates and prompts you to all your Dissolutenes and Profaneness, and why he hurries you hereto, and animates those Principles in you, whereby he governs you for himself.* Doth Satan love your God, your Souls, your Happiness? When you have by him filled your measure up, and at length find your selves in Hell; will that malignant and proud Enemy in Hell, (*the Devil* I mean) forget or pardon all your Reflections upon him? or will he overlook any thing done by you in time disserviceable to himself? He knows you never can be *his*, unless you cast off holy Speeches, Purposes

poſes and Practices, and yield your ſelves to be his obedient Servants, and to become his Voluntiers. Are others then your Enemies becauſe they would reſcue you from him? And laſtly, ſpend ſome ſolemn and cloſe Thoughts on this, *viz. What you are like to think of your own ſelf-ruined ſelves.* When God is your fixed Enemy; when Chriſt hath ſentenced you to Hell: when Angels have bound you up, and have thrown you thither: when all this World is burnt and gone: when you have ſeen Chriſt's Family carried up with himſelf to Glory, and find your ſelves, after an awful Trial, ſhut out for ever, and given up to the abſolute Pleaſure of your inſulting Enemy: when Conſcience, Paſſions, and Revenges are let looſe to fix tormentingly, and to center on your deſperate and remedileſs ſelves: and when your free Thoughts are to range in the Diſcoveries of all thoſe Springs of Miſery, of which once you took ſo little notice here. When theſe things are upon you in their eternal Strength and Fulneſs, can you then face, or have Converſes with your profane, debauched,

debauched, intemperate, wilful, deserted and distracted selves, delightfully? Or can you think that Christ will fetch those Souls to Heaven, that always practically and presumptuously told him how little they esteem'd Heaven or Him? and how much they preferred Satan and his Ways thereto? I have no personal Prejudice against any of you. I highly value your Learning, Parts and Ingenuities, and Usefulness, and all things valuable in you. And O that your speedy and effectual Reformation might prevent all things disgraceful and afflicting to you!

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